



NEWS RELEASE

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Poll: Challenge of Teacher Recruitment and Retention Poised to Accelerate as Radical Legislative Changes Threaten Public Education

BISMARCK, N.D. – As North Dakota's COVID-19 cases trend lower, teacher confidence in classroom safety related to the virus has increased. Of the 501 North Dakota United K-12 teacher and education support professional members surveyed, 52% said they feel safe or very safe returning to in-person schooling, up from just 31% in October. Despite this notable improvement in morale, the poll also reveals a drastic shift in the number of teachers who plan to retire without changing professions, largely due to increased stress and burnout. Since July, ND United has worked with DFM Research to conduct four membership surveys of our K-12 education members and support professionals to ascertain their level of comfort in teaching and providing support services during the current Coronavirus pandemic.

Of those surveyed, 83% said when they became a teacher, they intended to retire from the profession. Now, only 50% say they are likely to retire as a teacher, a dramatic drop which will exacerbate the challenge of recruiting and retaining teachers. Of particular concern is that the shift is strongest among younger teachers who also have significant experience. Members between the ages of 30 and 39 shifted from 82% planning to retire as teachers to only 38%. And of those who are considering leaving the profession, 61% said 2020/2021 is the first time they considered it.

Now, after a year when North Dakota teachers took on new levels of stress to support students during the pandemic, members of the North Dakota legislature are threatening to pass legislation that would divert monies raised to support public schools to private schools and homeschools (HB1281 and HB1369). Further, some legislators have proposed a radical change that would silence teachers and undermine local control of education (HB2215) by shrinking the amount of time allowed for negotiating contracts and making it easier to ignore teachers whose work improves the quality of education and strengthens our communities.

(more)

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“While I am heartened to see that teachers are feeling more comfortable about returning to full time in person teaching and learning, there is still great concern in the numbers of teachers that are considering leaving the profession.” said Nick Archuleta, President of North Dakota United. “Pre-pandemic we had a teacher recruitment and retention issue. Should teachers, who are experiencing very high levels of stress, leave the profession early, we may well be pushed into a teacher shortage crisis. Rather than focusing their efforts on legislation that diminishes the profession and disrespects teachers, legislators should be doing everything in their power to strengthen the profession and to support North Dakota’s outstanding teaching professionals. Doing anything less is a disservice to teachers, their students and the communities they serve.”

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North Dakota United is the largest professional union of public educators and employees in the state, representing more than 11,500 public school teachers, school staff, university faculty and staff, and city, county and state employees. Members of our professional association work hard every day in the state Capitol, in schools, on college campuses and at public worksites all across the state, in every community, providing the great public education and great public services that all North Dakotans deserve.

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